

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFULLY MANAGED DISASTER RECOVERY

APPLYING THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE NORTHRIDGE EARTHQUAKE

FACILITY EXECUTIVE or INCIDENT COMMANDER

1. **Save lives
first; but also address physical and financial recovery**

Health facilities do a terrific job of responding to a disaster. They are organized and disciplined to do so. Under the most adverse disaster conditions, they can still manage, creatively, often heroically, to treat the injured, protect the sick, save lives and prevent disabilities. In calamity, they still heal people. This is job #1.

But with the disaster can come extraordinary costs for operations and for repair of physical damage. Unless repairs can be timely and costs can be reimbursed, these can be debilitating to a health facility. Job #2 is therefore to apply comparable organization, discipline and creativity to the facility's physical and financial recovery.

The Recovery Administrative Preparedness System provides you with a recipe for this.

2. **Plan and organize to finance extraordinary recovery costs with extraordinary funding through extraordinary means.**

The potentially enormous one-time costs of a disaster may be reimbursable by sources of financing relatively unfamiliar to most health facility managers, including: 1) insurance; 2) the federal Disaster Recovery Public Assistance Program (Section 406 of the Stafford Act); 3) companion State disaster assistance.

The latter two programs are jointly administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES)

A. **Assume there's no such thing as too much documentation.**

The above programs can be generous in their coverage, but demanding about what you must prove before they will authorize work or reimburse.

Therefore, operate on the principle that extraordinary attention must be paid, and organizational structure committed, to documenting and archiving:

- ? the time, cost and activity of the disaster response effort;
- ? proof that any damage sustained was due exclusively to the disaster
- ? the specifics, time, cost and reasonableness of any work to remedy damage

B. Plan and organize ahead.

Before disaster strikes, establish the recovery administrative plan and organization, integrate it into the facility's emergency incident response plan, and exercise it periodically. It should provide for:

- ? expertise the facility management can regularly consult;
- ? a general administrator to administer recovery;
- ? someone assigned to manage the documentation process;
- ? someone specifically assigned and authorized to archive documents, to be retrievable, legible, complete and preferably original, for many years.

D. Activate the plan as early as possible

In a major incident—one likely to be declared a federal disaster—as soon as the operation is reasonably stabilized, activate the recovery administration plan.

The more immediate a request to FEMA to authorize justifiable emergency demolition or repair, the faster and simpler the approval process will be. Also, some of the best proof needed for reimbursement is descriptive and photographic evidence of pre-disaster preparations and damage prior to repair. The opportunity to observe and photograph these diminishes with each day of recovery.

E. Foster an aggressive approach about seeking reimbursement

Like tax code, the law and regulations governing Disaster Recovery Public Assistance Program are subject to interpretation. Any cost which is extraordinary in nature and can be related to the disaster is potentially reimbursable unless specifically excluded. FEMA and OES have a multi-level review and approval process. Unfavorable decisions may be appealed. Eschew wimpiness.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFULLY ADMINISTERED DISASTER RECOVERY

APPLYING THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE NORTHRIDGE EARTHQUAKE

RECOVERY ADMINISTRATOR

1. **Operate like
you're in an unfamiliar, unlighted tunnel on a dark night**

Unless you have extensive *and* recent experience with disaster recovery administration, you'll be dealing with a new funding program, rules, organization and people.

The potentially enormous one-time costs of a disaster may be reimbursable by sources of financing with which health facility managers generally have limited experience. These include: 1) casualty insurance; 2) the federal Disaster Recovery Public Assistance Program (Section 406 of the Stafford Act); 3) companion State disaster assistance.

The latter two programs are jointly administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES). The rules are ambiguous and subject to change. Documentation and record-keeping requirements are beyond what even a health facility is accustomed to.

The principles for getting successfully through this tunnel are: have and use a well-considered plan; obtain expert guidance early and rely upon it; attend to detail; but stay focused on your objectives.

2. **Have and use a well-considered plan**

Unless you have thought through and consulted with experts on changes to this Recovery Administrative Preparedness plan, we urge you to follow it close to the letter, especially in the early stages of recovery.

Specifically, implement the first three items on your assignment sheet before doing anything else.

- ? Appoint, orient and initiate the work of the *recovery documenter*.
- ? Appoint, orient and initiate the work of the *recovery archivist*.
- ? Get expert help

3. **Get expert help**

As of this writing, the following are sources of expertise available to L. A. County Department of Health Services facilities:

Network Development L. A. County Department of Health Services Phone (213) 226-8199, FAX (213) 226-8320 Frank Binch, Lea Ann Mitchum, Luis Gomez, plus hourly staff, available as-needed E-mail: Fbinch, LAMitchum, LGomez	Departmental resource for disaster recovery administration. Point of support and review, and liaison with the CAO, for the Department's disaster recovery claiming
County Disaster Administrative Team (CDAT) Carol Kindler, Director (e-mail CKindler) Chief Administrative Office Phone (213) 974-1154, FAX (213) 687-3765 Interdepartmental (CAO, A/C, DPW) staff team of approx. eight	County resource for disaster recovery administration Official point of contact between the County, FEMA, and OES (pursuant to Board of Supervisors' resolution)
David M. Griffith & Associates National consulting practice in the field of disaster recovery public assistance authorization and payment	On agreement with County to provide disaster recovery consultant services. CAO- CDAT manages this agreement. Network Development can arrange for consulting time as a service to facilities..

Make full use of such help. In particular, do not, without consultation, sign any document or approve anything over the phone at the request of a FEMA or OES field inspector. The inspector may pressure you. Resist it, remembering three things: 1) field inspectors have absolutely no authority to approve funding. Their job is to submit their recommendations for assistance, with either our concurrence or non-concurrence and rationale, for higher authority to act upon; 2) in a major disaster, many field inspectors are relatively inexperienced and may not be sufficiently familiar with the extremely complex reimbursement rules and regulations to recognize all your reimbursable expenditures; 3) they are under pressure from their managers to clear assignments by getting applicant sign-offs on "handwritten damage survey reports (DSR's)." Therefore, they may pressure you to sign

4. **Review the detail...**

The cliché, "the Devil's in the details" emphatically applies to insurance and to disaster recovery public assistance. For example, a failure to record the specific location where work was performed, or sufficient detail about that work, or sufficient documentation of the necessity for that work, can cause the loss of many thousands of dollars in reimbursement to your facility. Your assignment involves a mass of detail.

Specifically, it is advisable to become highly familiar with the work assigned to your *recovery documenter*, and to establish and participate in a system of quality controls over the work of the recovery documentation team. In so doing, your guiding principles should be: 1) we can't document too much, but we can document too little; and 2) it is much easier to document now than to go back and try to do it later.

It is also important that you develop a good understanding of your *recovery archivist's* mission, and provide insightful coaching and support. Are the records in each "DSR" case file available and sufficiently well organized to answer these questions with audit trail detail when asked by a FEMA auditor, even ten years after the disaster: *What work was*

done? *Where? Why* was it done (what verifiable damage did it address)? *Who* did it? *When? How* much expense was involved?

5. **...but keep focused on the these basic objectives...**

1. ACCOMPLISH A COMPLETE AND TIMELY PHYSICAL RECOVERY;

2. MAXIMIZE REIMBURSEMENT FOR COSTS OF RECOVERY

These two objectives can conflict. The disaster assistance approval process can slow a recovery effort down. Doing the work in advance of approval puts the facility at risk for the cost of the work done. The formula for achieving a successful balance of both is good documentation + expert strategy guidance.

6. **Use contractors rather than staff for recovery work wherever possible.**

Disaster recovery public assistance program reimbursement rules exclude costs for regular hours of regular employees. In situations where payroll and benefit costs can be claimed, the detail required to support a claim through closing inspection and audit is monumental. The limitations and documentation requirements for one-time contract services are far less burdensome.

**PRINCIPLES FOR
SUCCESSFULLY ADMINISTERING A DISASTER RECOVERY**
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RECOVERY DOCUMENTER

1. **Your mission is: to support repair of physical damage and maximize reimbursement for the extraordinary cost of the disaster, by collecting the information needed to authorize, claim, and verify disaster assistance.**
2. **You can complete this mission successfully by gathering the information that answers six key questions about the disaster preparations, the damage, and the work done in response:**

Disaster Preparations

What preparations were made? Where? Why were they made (logic and reasonableness of the action)? When? Who carried them out? How much did this cost?

Damage

What was the damage? Where? Why did it occur (its causal relationship to the disaster)? Who observed it? When? How extensive was the damage?

Initiate your exterior and interior damage surveys and photographic confirmations at the earliest opportunity, before even temporary remediation work is done.

Work done

What work was done? Where? Why was it done (what damage did it address and why was this the most reasonable way to address it)? Who did it? When? How much expense was involved?

3. **Be guided by these principles: 1) we can't document too much, but we can document too little; and 2) it is much easier to document now than to go back and try to do it later.**

☒ Documentation consists of photographic evidence, narratives written, affidavits of those involved or notes to a file if they are dated and signed.

N It is strongly recommended that you make heavy use of photographic evidence. Pictures carry great weight with FEMA.

P Use a camera with a date stamp feature.

P Photograph first the damage, then the work in progress, then the after work is complete.

N In situations where it could be argued that all or some of the damage pre-existed the disaster, try to obtain pre-disaster photos or other evidence of the location's status, preferably not long prior to the disaster.

4. **Organize the documentation effort by using the birds of a feather principle coupled with the team approach.**

The form titled "Documenting Disaster Response Work Performed" may need to capture efforts of many different disciplines, from doctors and nurses to medical records clerks and laboratory technicians. Similar documents will be used by crafts.

For each discipline affected, you may wish to designate, train and work through a documentation coordinator for that discipline. For example, a pharmacist may be better able to enlist compliance of other pharmacists (other birds of similar feather) with time documentation requirements than a non-pharmacist could.

By training and consulting with this cross-disciplinary group as a team, further benefit may be accomplished: 1) enabling communication of recovery-related information through the facility through the disciplines; 2) getting ideas from the field on how to improve documentation methods and forms; and 3) promoting inter-disciplinary cooperation.

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RECOVERY ARCHIVIST

1. **Your mission is: to support repair of physical damage and maximize reimbursement for the extraordinary cost of the disaster, by organizing, storing and enabling retrieval on demand, of the information needed to authorize, claim, and verify disaster assistance.**

2. **Your archives will support claims for reimbursement from sources which may include the following:**

1) insurance; 2) the federal Disaster Recovery Public Assistance Program (Section 406 of the Stafford Act); 3) companion State disaster assistance.

The latter two programs are jointly administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES)

3. **If you organize the files to meet FEMA's requirements, you will satisfy the requirements of any other reimbursement source as well.**

4. **FEMA wants information organized by "DSR."**

DSR = Damage Survey Report

It is a report of disaster impact on your facility, along with the scope of work and estimated cost required to recover from it. Once approved by FEMA, it is like a reverse purchase order; reimbursement can be claimed for expenses of work done consistent with the DSR's scope.

FEMA and OES field inspectors will write up the DSR's for your facility. They will want to subdivide the effects of the disaster up into logical groupings, then write a DSR for each of these groupings.

4. **You, the *Recovery Documenter*, and the *Recovery Administrator* constitute a team. The team will be backed by expert consultants which the *Recovery Administrator* will arrange. Consult regularly with one another.**

FEMA and OES inspectors will appreciate it if you have already divided your disaster response situation up into logical, DSR-like groupings. That will help them do their jobs.

Developing an initial approach to such groupings will be necessary early in the disaster in order for your *Disaster Administrator* to submit a required, preliminary list of damage and response items known as "Exhibit A." The three of you should confer on this. Once this is done, start organizing the information into a case file for each of the groupings.

As DSR's are actually written, you will need to reorganize the files to conform to the actual DSR's written. The three of you should confer regularly regarding this.

5.. **Follow the check sheet.**

The check sheet provided to you tells you what the record requirements are for each DSR. By following it rigorously from the outset, with the help of consultants arranged by the *Recovery Administrator*, you will get the job done.